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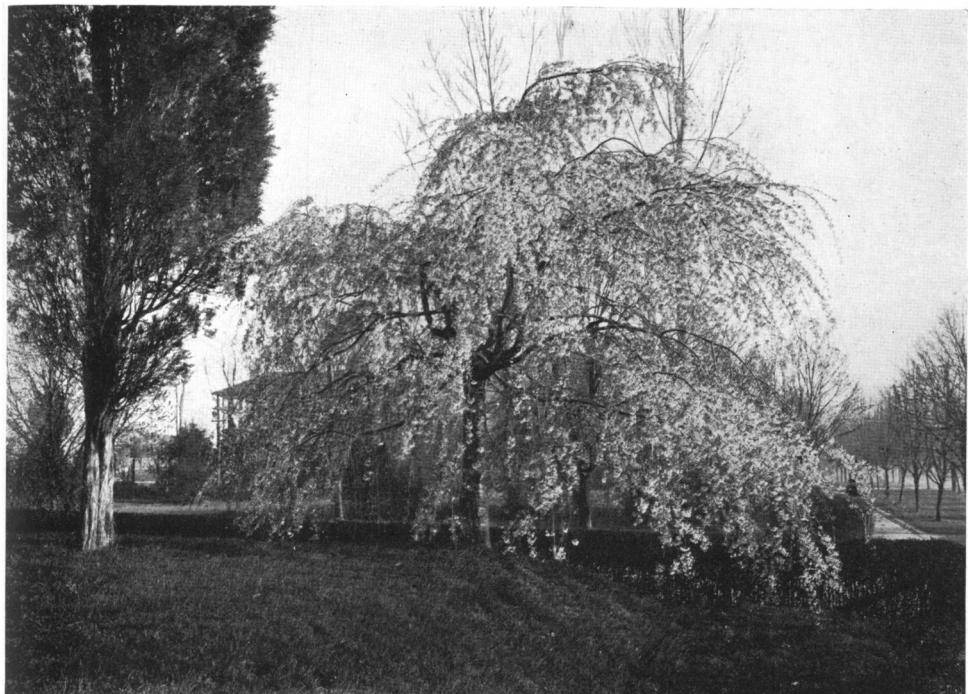
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A JAPANESE CHERRY BLOSSOM TREE

## THE ORNAMENTAL VALUE OF CHERRY BLOSSOM TREES

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**T**O make people feel that "beauty is its own excuse for being," I know of few plants so suitable as the cherry tree of Japan, for though a cherry tree, it bears no cherries. The cherry blossom tree startles the average American with the thought of growing year after year a fruitless fruit tree just because its blossoms are beautiful. Then if we stop and consider that a great nation of forty million people makes a national festival in honor of its flowering, that through centuries of cultivation and selection hundreds of forms have been created which vary almost as much as the chrysanthemums, or the peonies, some being as double as the Dorothy Perkins rose and almost as large, while others are smaller and more delicate than the flowers of the

Golden Bell, the thought grows upon us that these flower lovers of the East must find an inspiration in something which is merely beautiful for a brief time once a year.

Then, too, the cherry blossom tree blooms at the right time to be remembered. What layman remembers among the host of flowering plants of summer any one kind, but even the least initiated knows the crocus and the daffodil which come before anything else blooms.

The Japan flowering cherry, therefore, appears to me most admirably suited to the purpose of making people think.

Of the beauty of the various forms there can be no doubt, their suitability to the climate of the Atlantic Coast has been proved by many examples, and why

should we not plant them by the thousand and give them whatever care they need? The chrysanthemum has become a favorite with thousands of Americans, the peony is rapidly becoming a craze, and there is no reason why the cherry blossom tree, with its delicate variation of color and form, should not become popular in this country.

With all that travelers have written and told about the cherry trees of Japan, the thought seems scarcely to have occurred to us until quite recently that we can grow them in America, and the early introductions of this tree were confined to botanic gardens and a few private places.

Nine years ago, while traveling in Japan as the guest of Mr. Barbour Lathrop of Chicago, I purchased and sent a collection of these flowering cherry trees to the United States for him. They were planted in a situation in California too hot and dry for them and although they attracted much attention finally perished. Five years ago I planted a collection on my place in Maryland, and greatly to my pleasure they have found themselves perfectly at home. No trees could have done better.

Japanese connoisseurs report that there were once 300 varieties, but of these 300, many are almost indistinguishable. The striking kinds would probably not number more than thirty or forty.

Of these forty kinds, the most remarkable are the drooping forms of which there are two strains, one with pinker flowers than the other. One of these, the Ito Sakura, is the variety which grows to such an old age—a century, it is reported. The most noted of all the cherry trees of Japan is the ancient drooping tree of Kyoto. None of the 27 varieties which I have tried in Maryland has been so vigorous as this one. Its blossoms are single and small, and ten days or two weeks after they first open their color fades and they become the most exquisite ethereal things imaginable. There are several strikingly beautiful trees of this variety in Washington. Of the double-flowering forms the Miyakobeni Sakura is the most strikingly beautiful, for among the young

bronze leaves the large, deep shell-pink blossoms hang like semi-double pink roses on long slender stems. Then there is the Naden Sakura, which produces a mass of full white blooms which hang like clouds on a still summer day in rifts with their faces all on the same level.

There is one strikingly delicate green-flowered form, Kofugen, and another that bears occasional blooms in October as well as in April; one which is pyramidal in form like a Lombardy poplar and others which spread out in the most picturesque way. With some forms the young bronze leaves rival the flowers in beauty, and the deep red autumn foliage of others is as handsome as that of our dogwood.

One thing, however, the cherry blossom tree is not. It is not a formal tree, and when one reads of the cherry tree avenues of Japan one must not imagine they are majestic avenues like the elm tree avenue of Salem, the royal palm allée of Rio or the famous Canarium allée of Java. In their informal, irregular, windblown aspect, however, lies a peculiar charm, one which I believe Americans will learn to appreciate and use more and more in extensive landscape gardening and in the restricted areas around their houses. A few of the best nursery firms keep these cherry trees and the Yokohama Nursery Company imports them on order. In European and American nurseries the Japanese varieties, especially the drooping ones, have generally been budded high like standard roses on the large-leaved Mazzard cherry stock, but the Japanese nurserymen use the wild Sakura, a rapidly growing tree which will grow from cuttings and graft the fine-named varieties so the union is below the level of the ground. Low grafted forms make a quicker growth than those grafted high and make much more graceful trees.

The illustration on the foregoing page shows a Japanese cherry blossom tree only six or eight years old as it appeared in flower for two weeks in April on the place of the Rev. Thomas S. Childs at Chevy Chase, Maryland. Even without the charm of color its beauty is manifest.